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McCollum Responds to St. Croix County Board of Supervisors' Resolution, Calling on Congress to Pass Legislative Exemption

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) voiced her strong opposition to the St. Croix County Board of Supervisors' request that the Minnesota and Wisconsin Congressional delegations support legislation to exempt a proposed \$700 million replacement for the existing Stillwater Lift Bridge.

"With regard to exempting the St. Croix River Crossing Project from the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, I will do everything in my power as a Member of Congress to defeat any federal legislation that lifts the protections from the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway for a project of this magnitude," writes Congresswoman McCollum. "Frankly, the prospect of such legislation becoming law is negligible which makes such a strategy more of a political distraction than contributing to a real transportation solution.

The text of the letter is included.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum serves on the House Appropriations and Budget Committees.

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February 25, 2011

St. Croix County Board of Supervisors
St. Croix County Government Center
1101 Carmichael Road
Hudson, WI 54016-7710

Dear St. Croix County Board of Supervisors:

Your recent letter was received by my office informing me of the County Board's action to pass Resolution 1-2011 on January 4, 2011. Your resolution called on Congress to "exempt the St. Croix River Crossing Project from the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act so that construction of the proposed new bridge may begin."

It is difficult to express how strongly I oppose the position taken by the St. Croix County Board. The proposed bridge across the St. Croix River - with an estimated cost of at least \$700 million - is fiscally irresponsible, environmentally damaging, and will create a transportation mess for communities along Minnesota Highway 36 in the Congressional District I represent.

It has been reported due to delays and inflation the bridge project's cost (in its current form) could exceed \$1 billion. In recent days I have heard Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker tell the national news media innumerable times how "we're broke." How will the State of Wisconsin come up with its share of a \$700 million to \$1 billion project if it is "broke"? As you well know the State of Minnesota and the federal government are also facing significant fiscal challenges that make this type of excessive and irresponsible project both unwise and improbable.

With regard to exempting the St. Croix River Crossing Project from the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, I will do everything in my power as a Member of Congress to defeat any federal legislation that lifts the protections from the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway for a project of this magnitude. Frankly, the prospect of such legislation becoming law is negligible which makes such a strategy more of a political distraction than contributing to a real transportation solution.

There is no doubt that commuters in St. Croix County, WI and Washington County, MN face traffic congestion. The Stillwater Lift Bridge is no longer adequate. A new, appropriately scaled and designed bridge is needed to help relieve traffic congestion. I would propose that officials from Minnesota and Wisconsin work together to propose a new bridge project that is appropriate to the transportation needs of the area, cost-effective for taxpayers, and protects the environmental integrity of this unique shared scenic treasure for the citizens of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

I look forward to working with you and other local, federal, state officials and other stakeholders from Minnesota and Wisconsin, along with the Obama Administration, to support alternative ideas for a bridge that will alleviate traffic, protect the river and be more cost effective than the

rejected proposal.

Sincerely,
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

cc: Governor Mark Dayton
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Al Franken
Representative Ron Kind
Representative Michele Bachmann